

Mid-East Prophecy Update – July 31st, 2011

- Every week, since back in 2006, we have set aside a few minutes on Sunday mornings so as to devote some time to studying Bible prophecy.
 - The reason that we do this is because the Bible predicts certain specific events that will take place in the last days before the Lord returns.
 - We believe that what's happening in the world today is a fulfillment of those Bible Prophecies, and that the rapture could happen at any time.
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- We look primarily at events in the Middle East, specifically related to Israel because, as it's been said; "Israel is God's prophetic clock."
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- For today's update, I'm going to do something a little bit different than what we usually do, and begin a series on the rapture of the church.
 - It's important to know, this will not first and foremost be a teaching just on the rapture, it will be more of a teaching on the "why" of the rapture.
 - More specifically, why our belief in the rapture, and the timing of the rapture is not forgiving of just hoping that it is before the 7 year tribulation.
 - We can know from scripture, not only that the church is raptured before the seven year tribulation, but why it has to be before the tribulation.
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- I need to preface this by sharing with you some of the reasons for teaching on the doctrine of a "pre-tribulation rapture," of the bride of Christ.
 - I'm hoping that doing this will provide both a better understanding, and a greater appreciation for knowing "why" we believe, "what" we believe.
 - We do err when we negligently take a doctrinal position solely on the basis of what's taught, without searching the scriptures for ourselves.
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- That is one reason that I deemed it necessary to do an in-depth teaching on why the rapture has to happen before the seven year tribulation.
 - Another reason, perhaps more importantly; if Satan can confuse a Christian about a pre-tribulation rapture, he's able to neuter that Christian.
 - I'm keenly aware that saying this sounds provocative however, absent the expectancy of the rapture, you "gut-out" the urgency of the Gospel.
 - This may explain the complacent condition of the church today. If Jesus coming for His church isn't imminent then there's no hurry nor worry.
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- I believe this is the reason even mentioning a pre-tribulation rapture causes so much hostility and controversy bringing with it the divisiveness.
 - Satan has succeeded in dividing the body of Christ, and in so doing, the church today is focused on the anti-Christ instead of Jesus Christ.
 - Make no mistake about it, if we're not focused on the imminent return of Jesus Christ, neither are we focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ.
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- One might argue that those left behind after the rapture, will still have a chance to accept Jesus Christ and reject the mark of the anti-Christ.
 - While this is true, it erroneously pre-supposes two assertions, the first of which is that giving my life to Christ means I'm still the bride of Christ.
 - Furthermore, this argument assumes that if I couldn't live for Christ before the tribulation, that I would be able to die for Christ in the tribulation.
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- A third reason for teaching on the pre-tribulation rapture is that it has the propensity to not only be for us a game changer, but a life changer.
 - The fourth reason is, given the increasing intensity and enormity of recent geopolitical events globally, I believe it's closer than we may expect.
 - Fifth and finally; though I've always talked about it, and continually referred to it, it's been six years since I've done an in-depth teaching on it.
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- In the next few weeks, unless of course something happens, we'll look at "7" reasons the rapture has to happen before the "7" year tribulation.
 - You may be saying to yourself; I already believe the rapture happens before the tribulation, so why do I have to attend for the next few weeks?
 - The Apostle Peter answers this for us in his second epistle, (3:3-18). I'll read it first, then share something that God impressed on my heart.
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- 2 Peter 3:3-18 NIV** First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. (4) They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." (5) But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. (6) By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. (7) By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. (8) But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (9) The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. (11) Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives (12) as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. (13) But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. (14) So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. (15) Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. (16) He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. (17) Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. (18) But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.
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- I've been sensing from the Lord as the pastor of this wonderful church, that I need to ready you and steady you in what's ahead for the church.
 - Though we already are, we will be increasingly more, the recipients of mocking and ridicule because of our belief in the pre-tribulation rapture.
 - It's for this reason we need to be on guard so as to not be led astray by the error of those ignorant and unstable people who distort scripture.
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- Lord willing, commencing next Sunday, we will begin with the first of the "7" reasons the rapture has to happen before the "7" year tribulation.
 - If you're wondering why I have "7" reasons, it's because not only is "7" the number of completion, but there are "7" letters in the word rapture.
 - At the risk of totally sounding like a dork, I have created an acronym using each of the "7" letters in the word rapture, to teach on the rapture.

REVELATION TO US

AFFECT UPON US

PURITY OF US

TRUMPETS FOR US

UNIFORMITY WITH US

RESPONSIBILITY ON US

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM US